

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHJM #2919 1941521
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 131521Z JUL 06
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3390
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002919

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGGERFO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/13/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [PHUM](#)
SUBJECT: AMID PALESTINIAN JUBILATION, ABU MAZEN CALLS FOR
RESTRAINT

REF: JERUSALEM 2902

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Palestinian public reaction to the July 12 Hezbollah attack and kidnapping of two IDF soldiers was immediate and overwhelmingly positive. Hamas praised the Hezbollah attack and called for a unification of efforts to attain the release of Palestinian and Arab prisoners. The Palestinian "street" has taken the kidnappings as a sign that a more robust prisoner release may be in the works. Fatah members attending a July 12 meeting with President Abbas (Abu Mazen) reacted with applause to the kidnapping. Abu Mazen, however, chided them and urged restraint. End summary.

Hamas Offers Praise

¶2. (C) Following the July 12 capture of two IDF soldiers by Hezbollah, Hamas issued a statement praising the attack and describing it as a "legitimate" means of resistance to secure the release of Palestinian and Arab prisoners. The statement also called on Israel to conduct negotiations to end the current crisis and exchange prisoners. Hamas PA Minister of Foreign Affairs Mahmud al-Zahar told al-Jazeera television July 12 that Israel should respond to "reason and wisdom" on the issue of the captured soldiers, adding that talks with Egyptian officials were ongoing to reach a mechanism for the release of Palestinian prisoners.

The "Street" Reacts With Delight

¶3. (C) Palestinian public reaction to the kidnappings was swift, as gunmen and prisoners' families in Gaza and in many parts of the West Bank expressed their approval. Many were optimistic that the kidnappings would speed up efforts to secure the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. In some areas of Gaza, Nablus, and Jenin, Palestinian activists reportedly distributed sweets to the public.

Abu Mazen Urges Restraint

¶4. (C) A July 12 statement from Abu Mazen's presidential office expressed concern over the situation and warned against the spreading of the violence to other areas. Presidential spokesman Nabil Abu Rudaynah urged the international community to intervene at once to prevent any further escalation. Commenting on the anticipated Israeli military response, Abu Rudaynah said that no amount of force by the Israeli side will resolve the conflict.

¶5. (C) Speaking on July 12 in Ramallah before a crowd of

Fatah supporters -- some of whom reacted with applause upon hearing the news of the captured IDF soldiers -- Abu Mazen urged restraint. He commented that Palestinians should focus on specific categories of prisoners -- female prisoners, sick prisoners, and/or prisoners who have served more than 20 years -- rather than escalating demands. He also expressed concern over the ramifications for Palestinians if Gilad Shalit died while in captivity.

Comment

16. (C) The capture of the two Israeli soldiers and the subsequent Israeli military response into Lebanon overshadowed the killing of 26 Palestinians in Israeli military operations on July 12 (reftel). Despite the high casualty rates and the likelihood of increased Israeli military activity in Gaza and in Lebanon, the demand from the Palestinian public for a more robust prisoner exchange is likely to grow in the wake of the July 12 kidnappings.

WALLES